



People Inc. DEI Calendar: April 2024

Monthly Observances

Arab American Heritage Month

- National Arab American Heritage Month (NAAHM) is nationally celebrated every April. The month is dedicated to celebrating the rich cultures and histories of Arab Americans and recognizing the roles and achievements they have made throughout the nation's history. Arab American heritage in America is a diverse mosaic in and of itself, from those whose heritage is from the Middle East to those whose heritage traces back to North Africa.
- In 2019, Representatives Debbie Dingell and Rashida Tlaib issued a congressional resolution for the month to be recognized on a national level. This reflects the vast and diverse Arab American population in the United States.
- Additionally, Arab-Americans continue to face harmful stereotyping, exclusion, and hate crimes due to rampant currents of islamophobia in the United States. It is significant to not only recognize the rich cultural heritage of Arab Americans, but to also not condone this bigotry.
- **Resources:**
 - Arab-American Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) WNY: <https://accesswny.org/>
 - Arab American Institute: <https://www.aaiusa.org/>

Autism Acceptance Month

- Historically, Autism Acceptance Month was first recognized as Autism Awareness Month, observed since 1970 through organizations like the Autism Society. This week served as part of an awareness campaign to increase public understanding of the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and work towards supporting the lives of those living with autism. As of 2020, the incidence of autism in the United States is about 1 in 54, making autism one of most prominent developmental disabilities among the United States population.
- Throughout the last decade, there has been a push from many groups in the Autism community to change the terminology surrounding the month by shifting from the name Autism Awareness Month to Autism Acceptance Month. The Autism Self Advocacy Network (ASAN) has adopted Autism Acceptance Month since 2011, and many other Autistic advocacy groups have since followed suit. This shift from awareness to acceptance is significant because it highlights that although Autism's existence in society is visible, acceptance of Autism as a natural condition remains the biggest difficulty faced by the Autism community. Autism is still heavily stigmatized by the public, and this stigma has prevented those with Autism from accessing support, having job opportunities, and living comfortably.
- **Resources:**
 - Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN): <https://autisticadvocacy.org/>
 - Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network (AWN): <https://awnnetwork.org/>
 - Self Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE): <https://sabeusa.com/>

Celebrate Diversity Month

- A celebration initiated in 2004 to recognize and honor the diversity surrounding us all. It is a time to recognize and understand our differences, be it gender, race, ethnicity, faith, sexual orientation and other factors. By celebrating differences and similarities during this month, organizers hope that people will gain a deeper understanding of each other.

Deaf History Month

- Celebrated annually every April, National Deaf History Month honors the historical accomplishments and roles of those who are deaf or hard of hearing. The month used to start and end on two dates that marked significant milestones in American Deaf History. On March 13, 1988, J. King Jordan was named the first deaf president of Gallaudet University after the successful student-led protest called *Deaf President Now!*. Notably, Gallaudet University was founded within this month on April 8, 1864, after President Abraham Lincoln signed a charter establishing it as the first college for deaf students in America. Gallaudet remains the only liberal arts college in the world specifically serving deaf and hard of hearing students.
- The former last date of the month, April fifteenth, commemorates another significant event in deaf history. On April 15, 1817, the American School of the Deaf opened in Hartford, Connecticut as the first public school for the deaf. Laurent Clerc, a French deaf man, was not only the first teacher and co-founder of the school but also influenced the development of American Sign Language (ASL). In 2022, the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) Board elected to change the observance of Deaf History Month to encompass all of April. This decision aims to better recognize the voices and achievements of marginalized people within the deaf community, especially with regards to Deaf and hard-of-hearing people of color. NAD: <https://www.nad.org/2022/01/31/national-deaf-history-month-dates/>
- The origin of Deaf History Month dates to 1996, because of two deaf employees teaching sign language to their co-workers at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library in Washington, D.C. Through the advocacy of the National Association of the Deaf, in 1997 the week-long event grew into a month-long celebration of the rich history of deaf culture. In 2006, the American Library Association (ALA) and the National Association of the Deaf declared March thirteenth through April fifteenth to be Deaf History Month. Regardless of the change in dates, the observance of Deaf History Month continues to be advocated for every year.

Parkinsons Awareness Month

- This is a long-term disorder where the central nervous system that affects the motor system degenerates. Symptoms include tremors, movement and balance difficulties, limb rigidity and delayed muscle action.

Daily Observations

4/1 – Dyngus Day

- Dyngus Day is a Polish American holiday celebrated after Easter Sunday to mark the end of the Lent period in the Catholic denomination. This holiday is most notably celebrated by the Polish American community in Buffalo, New York. Dyngus Day festivities have attracted thousands of visitors to annually to the Buffalo region. Dyngus Day serves not only as a celebration of the end of Lent but also as a display of regional Polish pride.
- Today, Dyngus Day is usually accompanied with parades, polka music, and other Polish festivities in Buffalo, New York, and other cities with notable Polish American communities.

4/2 – World Autism Awareness Day

- World Autism Awareness Day is an internationally recognized observance designated by the United Nations in 2007. The day was established to encourage Member States of the United Nations and relevant institutions to raise public awareness regarding autism and work on initiatives to provide support for those living with autism.
- Although awareness still holds some significance, it is important to recognize that those living with autism need acceptance of their disability most of all. This requires understanding that having autism is not a tragedy, a burden, or a shameful condition. Additionally, working towards developing a “cure” for autism is not only impractical, but poses danger for the lives of those living with autism and further stigmatizes the disability. People with autism have developed a strong community of self-advocacy and have emphasized the continued need for access to accommodations and healthcare, an end to discrimination, and an acceptance of the fulfilled lives they lead.

4/4 – QingMing Festival

- Known in English as Tomb-Sweeping Day, QingMing Festival is a traditional Chinese holiday that begins on the fifteenth day after the spring equinox. This holiday serves as a time dedicated to honoring one’s deceased ancestors, particularly through the acts of cleaning their tombs and making offerings to the deceased. Tomb sweeping is rooted in ancient Chinese traditions of filial piety (reverence for one’s parents) and ancestral worship. How one conducts the process of tomb cleaning is dependent on a region’s burial practices.
- Offerings provided to ancestral tombs vary by region, but common gifts include food, liquor, incense, flowers, and money. Other activities done to observe QingMing Festival include enjoying nature through outdoor trips, planting trees, and kite flying.

April 5 – Laylat al-Qadr

- The holiest night of the year for Muslims, is traditionally celebrated on the twenty-seventh day of Ramadan. It is known as the Night of Power and commemorates the night that the Quran was first revealed to Muhammad.

4/11 – World Parkinson’s Day

- Every year on April 11, communities, families, healthcare professionals, and many others come together to bring awareness of Parkinson's. Awareness for Parkinson's was proposed in 1997 and commemorated the birthdate of Dr. James Parkinson, who first identified the disease nearly 200 years ago (National Today).
- Parkinson's affects the central nervous system and motor system. This disease is a long-term disorder. Parkinson's can cause some difficulties in the workplace including, fatigue, slowness of movement, loss of motor control, speech and vocal changes, and difficulty with multi-tasking. Western New York research has shown that Parkinson's affects many people in our community. It has been found that Western New York has one of the nation's highest rates of Parkinson's (Spectrum News 1).

4/12 – GLSEN Day of Silence

- The Day of Silence is a student-led demonstration that was originated in 1996 by college students and later, championed by GLSEN (The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network). The demonstration started as a day where students remained silent throughout the day in somber observation of all those LGBTQIA+ Youths who have been silenced by bullying and suicide. At the end of the day students were encouraged to come together in “Breaking the Silence”. Since then, the Day of Silence has been adopted by schools throughout the U.S., as well as internationally.
- LGBTQIA+ students are more than four times as likely to attempt suicide compared to their straight and cisgender peers (Johns et al., 2019; Johns et al., 2020). Negative treatment by others, such as bullying, is a strong and consistent risk factor for youth suicide (Koyanagi et al., 2019), and LGBTQ youth experience bullying at significantly greater rates than their straight and cisgender peers (Reisner et al., 2015; Webb et al., 2021).
- This year, the GLSEN has dubbed the day “Day of (No) Silence.” Encouraging students and allies to speak out and protest the harmful effects of harassment and discrimination. They still recognize the silent option for those who do not feel safe or comfortable speaking out.
- **Resources:**
 - The Trevor Project: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>
 - The Human Rights Campaign: [Mental Health Resources in the LGBTQ+ Community - Human Rights Campaign \(hrc.org\)](https://www.hrc.org/campaigns/mental-health-resources-in-the-lgbtq-community)
 - GLSEN: <https://www.glsen.org/>
 - PFLAG—Parents, Families and Friends dedicated to supporting, educating, and advocating for LGBTQ+ people: <https://pflag.org/>

4/13 to 4/15 – Songkran

- The Songkran Festival is a Thai New Year’s celebration. In the Sanskrit language, a Songkran represents the transition of the sun from one Zodiac sign to the next. To distinguish Songkran as the New Year, the holiday is sometimes referred to as the Major Songkran.
- The Songkran festival has traditionally been tied to the vernal equinox, much like many other New Year celebrations. However, due to slight changes in the Earth’s axis over many years the date for the festival drifted away from the first day of spring. Although no longer the official New Year observed in Thailand (January first), Songkran remains a festival with a fixed start date of April thirteenth.
- Due to associations with the beginning of spring, Songkran is observed through spring cleaning, a tradition that encourages being rid of old unneeded things to avoid bad luck and encourages spiritual cleansing through self-reflection. In tandem with spring cleaning is the Songkran tradition of throwing water. Throwing blessed water on people is thought to bring good fortune. Interestingly, this custom resembles that of Dyngus Day celebrated the same month.

4/22 – Earth Day

- Earth Day is an annual event on April 22 to demonstrate support for environmental protection. First held on April 22, 1970, it now includes a wide range of events coordinated globally by Earthday.org including one billion people in more than 193 countries. The official theme for 2024 is "Planet vs. Plastics."

4/22-4/30 – Passover

- Passover (*Pesach* in Hebrew) is a Jewish festival celebrating the exodus from Egypt and the Israelites’ freedom from slavery to the Egyptians. The whole story can be found in the Book of Exodus of the Bible. Passover is one of the most widely celebrated Jewish holidays.
- The origin of Passover: God promised to redeem His people from the bondage of Pharaoh. God sent Moses to the Egyptian king with the command that Pharaoh “let my people go.” When Pharaoh refused, God brought ten plagues on the land of Egypt. The tenth and worst of the plagues was the death of all the firstborn in Egypt.

- The night of the first Passover was the night of the tenth plague. On that fateful night, God told the Israelites to sacrifice a spotless lamb and mark their doorposts and lintels with its blood. Then, when the Lord passed through the nation, He would “pass over” the households that showed the blood. In a very tangible way, the blood of the lamb saved the Israelites from death, as it kept the destroyer from entering their homes. The Israelites were saved from the plague, and their firstborn children stayed alive.
- The children of Israel in Egypt followed God’s command and kept the first Passover. However, none of the Egyptians did so. All through Egypt, behind the unmarked, bloodless doorways of the Egyptians, the firstborn children died at midnight. “There was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead.” This dire judgment finally changed the Egyptian king’s heart, and he released the Israelite slaves. God instituted a commemorative meal: fire-roasted lamb, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread. To this day, Jews all over the world celebrate the Passover in obedience.

4/22 to 4/28 – World Primary Immunodeficiency Week

- During the last week of April, health organizations across the globe engaged in an annual campaign to bring awareness to primary immunodeficiency diseases. There are more than 200 different forms of primary immune deficiency diseases. In the United States alone more than approximately 500,00 people are affected (NIH). The first form of primary immunodeficiency disease was first proposed in 1952. When individuals encounter these diseases, they may be more prone to getting sick more often due to a lower immune system. People with this disease often have infections that last longer than most people. In addition, infections that are hard to treat and do not respond to antibiotics or require IV antibiotics. Primary Immunodeficiency can also get so severe that the infections can require hospitalization (CDC).

4/27 – Lazarus Saturday

- Lazarus Saturday, celebrated by the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches, refers to the movable feast before Palm Sunday, which it is associated. It celebrates the raising from the dead of Lazarus by Jesus Christ.

Regional Events

We are revamping the regional events section, check the web for events near you in April.